Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Original) A method for decreasing the amount of mSREBP in a cell characterized by an elevated level of mSREBP comprising contacting the cell with an agent that specifically inhibits *de novo* synthesis of ceramide in the cell, thereby decreasing the amount of mSREBP in the cell.

2-4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the cell is a human cell.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the cell is a hepatocyte.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the cell is an adipocyte.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the agent specifically inhibits the activity of an enzyme which catalyzes part of the *de novo* ceramide pathway.

9. (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the enzyme is serine-palmitoyl transferase or ceramide synthase.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the agent inhibits the expression of an enzyme which catalyzes part of the *de novo* ceramide pathway.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the enzyme is serine-palmitoyl transferase or ceramide synthase.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the agent is selected from the group consisting of (a) myriocin; (b) cycloserine; (c) Fumonisin B1; (d) PPMP; (e) compound D609; (f) methylthiodihydroceramide; (g) propanolol; and (h) resvaratrol.

13. (Original) A method for increasing the amount of mSREBP in a cell comprising contacting the cell with an agent that specifically increases *de novo* synthesis of ceramide in the cell, thereby increasing the amount of mSREBP in the cell.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the cell is a human cell.

15. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the cell is a hepatocyte.

16. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the cell is an adipocyte.

17-43. (Canceled)

44. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the cell is present in a subject afflicted with a disorder characterized by an elevated level of mSREBP in the subject's cells and the contacting of the cells comprises administering to the subject a therapeutically effective amount of an agent that specifically inhibits *de novo* synthesis of ceramide in the subject's cells, so as to thereby treat the subject.

45. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein the disorder is a lipid disorder.

46. (New) The method of claim 45, wherein the lipid disorder is selected from the group consisting of (a) hypercholesterolemia; (b) hypertriglyceridemia; (c) combined familial hyperlipidemia; (d) obesity; (e) type I diabetes; (f) type II diabetes; (g) alcoholism; (h) metabolic syndrome; (i) syndrome X; (j) hypertension; and (k) cardiovascular disease.

47. (New) The method of claim 44, wherein the disorder is selected from the group consisting of (a) hereditary sensory neuropathy; (b) Niemann Pick Disease Type A; and (c) Niemann Pick Disease Type B.

48. (New) The method of claim 17, wherein the agent is selected from the group consisting of (a) myriocin; (b) cycloserine; (c) Fumonisin B1; (d) PPMP; (e) compound D609; (f) methylthiodihydroceramide; (g) propanolol; and (h) resvaratrol.

49. (New) A method for determining whether an agent decreases *de novo* synthesis of ceramide in a cell, which method comprises the steps of:

(a) contacting the cell with the agent under suitable conditions;

(b) determining the amount of *de novo* synthesis of ceramide in the cell after a suitable period of time; and

(c) comparing the amount of *de novo* synthesis of ceramide determined in step (b) with the amount of *de novo* synthesis of ceramide in a cell in the absence of the agent, a lower amount of *de novo* synthesis of ceramide in the cell contacted with the agent indicating that the agent decreases the amount of *de novo* synthesis of ceramide in the cell.